

The Black Cat



**SEPTEMBER
1911**

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The Fee.*

BY EUGENE BOYLAN.



It was a gold brick. I paid for it with nearly all the money I had. This was the state of mind to which six months' attempt at country practice had brought me. I had learned that the rural brother wished me well, but for himself he didn't want to be experimented with by "no kid." And to make the matter worse they had been an outrageously healthy lot. So you can understand how good it seemed when at last I got back into the blessed, microbe-infested air of Chicago. I was exuberant with confidence. I was credulous and unsuspecting when this proposition was made me to purchase a partnership.

I bought in with a man who had built up a large practice. It was among a class of people who were too busy fighting poverty and booze, and each other, to ring for assistance until the case came to a last stand against the undertaker. You're right, it was good to see people genuinely sick. Why, just as the other doctor and I were discussing our terms of agreement, in walked a tough-looking chap, calmly holding one eye back in the socket from which it had been partially dislodged by a knife. Yes, sir, and after we'd patched him up, he walked out again, cool as

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you please. His nerve warmed up my enthusiasm; and moreover he laid down a twenty-dollar gold piece with a "Keep t' change, Doc."

"Is that frequent?" I asked my new partner.

"Well, yes — no — that is, the man is a burglar. They rely upon me. I can't resist the call of the hunted."

No more could I, after that.

However, there were no more real outlaws that month. Likewise, there were few cash entries. But the books looked good, and at what seemed to me the proper time, I said something about sending out statements. Now there was a blow coming to me, but my senior broke the news gently; in fact, he scarcely more than intimated the truth. I insisted, and we sent out some bills.

Most of our neatly worded requests for settlement on account were returned by the post office, unclaimed. One old scrub woman came in and paid a dollar.

The following month we were busier than ever; but since my disillusionment, my temper grew uglier every day. The only reassuring calls came from saloons and disorderly resorts where bloody rows had occurred, and where invariably the bills were promptly paid in order to quickly hush the matter.

One black, wet, nasty evening I got a hurry-up telephone summons from Big Fitz's saloon. I didn't ask any questions over the wire. I knew I wasn't expected to. I may as well admit that I walked more quickly than I should have moved toward an honest working man's house. I didn't realize how mercenary I had become. Social problems had never engaged much of my attention. I thought myself a pretty good fellow, in an off-hand way, and I minded nobody's morals save my own. I was daily drifting toward financial difficulties and not because of vice or crime. Indeed, it was quite the other way round. I was being handicapped by plodding, stupid people, who recognized so many other obligations that they had nothing left for me. Without philosophy or decent excuse I was acquiring a positive antipathy for the most logically deserving people among our patients.

Somewhat to my surprise I found no "rough house" indica-

tions when I entered the saloon. Several half drunken, rough-looking men were clutching the bar rail and swaying to the tune of a maudlin song. One at the end began pounding with his fist. He wanted everybody to take something more, although an untasted round of whiskey still stood before the crowd. "Ev'body," he insisted, and turned about with a grandly hospitable gesture. When his face came into view I recognized our handiwork on the mutilated eye. It was our old friend the burglar.

I knew what was expedient in a place like that, so I drank with them and listened to the man's extravagant praise of my surgical skill. From this he speedily drifted into high pitched lauding of his own prowess in that fight which had led to our first meeting. Any sort of excitement is contagious in such company, and most uncomfortably I found myself jostled this way and that by bad-smelling rowdies who wished to talk all at once. At that age my professional dignity was the tenderest spot in my make-up. With stern elbows I widened my standing space and held high my medicine case, with an imperative look at the proprietor.

Big Fitz possessed a voice and an arm adapted to his business. "Shut up," he roared, and the sound of wrangling fell by comparison to the volume of a mere twitter. At the same time his enormous, knotted fist came over to shake in his customers' faces. "Here you," he commanded the burglar, "while yer got yer nnt full o' wot ye done to Red Riordan an' wot he done to you, just show the Doc up to Red's house. He's needed there."

"Sure," answered the man in a suddenly sober voice.

In my eagerness for fresh air I led the way toward the door. Turning there, I found my guide had paused at the end of the bar for a word with Fitz. Some explanation passed which I could not hear, and then presently the burglar and I were outside picking our way over the miserable walk of an unlighted side street. It was so dark about us and so bad underfoot that I came near a fall before we had gone many rods. My companion's hand gripped my arm and continued holding it, while he cared for my safety as though I were a woman and he a

gentleman. I could just see the side of his face. It was the sightless half. Yet he held his chin high and walked with certainty as if his feet had been possessed of their own vision. It came to me that here was a wild animal, long trained to the dangers of the night. He had shaken off all traces of intoxication. At first he said very little.

Suddenly I asked, "What do you know about Red Riordan?"

"He's the plug wot carved out me lamp," the man answered. His voice sounded so queerly unconcerned that I imagined I could detect a concealment of menace.

On the whole, I was feeling the thrill of adventure. I rather liked not knowing what was ahead of me. Still it was a mighty dark, grewsome night in a black hole of a street, and my stomach didn't seem to feel just right for too bloody a climax.

I stopped and said, "Look here, I can probably make my way on alone now, if you'll give me a few pointers. No use in your having your other eye gouged out on my account."

The burglar made some first sounds of a chuckle. "You sure don't know Red Riordan, nor me neither. Why we was out turnin' tricks together a week after that scrap come off."

I felt the grip tighten on my arm and the man halted a step as he turned to add, rather sharply:

"Anybody 's got to git mad sometimes, ain't he?"

I hastily agreed.

"Besides, Red 's mixed queer. His old man was Irish and his mother raised him in the Kentucky hills. Blood lettin' is regular where Red got educated, an' bein' Irish, too, he learned easy. Why, he don't think no more o' croakin' a man than you would o' steppin' on a cockroach. But its only when he's mad, or — or — interested."

I had began to notice that the damp atmosphere was penetrating and held that to account for my shiver. We were coming near to where the street was closed by a railroad embankment. The broken board-sidewalk had ended altogether, leaving us wading in the mud. The shanties were further apart.

My burglar guide suddenly stopped. "Now I guess you c'n

be done with me," he said. "Just cross over an' make that light in the basement of the end house. That's Red's building. His ol' woman bought it when she come north; an', now she's dead, Red won't sell, not even to raise "fall money" for a pinch. When he's around, and ain't too much wanted, he lives upstairs. Likely that poor woman downstairs don't pay reg'lar rent. All she gits to support herself an' kid is by boardin' some 'shovel stiff,' now an' then. I hope she ain't took bad, to-night. Wot's the matter? Ye scared to go alone?"

"No." I had not suddenly halted in the dirty street because of fear. Iustead, the emotions which controlled me were surprise and disgust. Instantly I saw my mistake. It was quite naturally due to the circumstances under which I had been summoned. To be sure, Big Fitz, the saloon-keeper, had merely stated that I was needed at Red Riordan's house. I had jumped at conclusions; had supposed my errand to be attendance upon a wounded outlaw, and the sure collection of a liberal fee. Instead, I had unknowingly been hurrying to the bedside of a destitute tenant in the criminal's house. "Another 'humanity case'!" I spoke the words aloud in wretched disgust. Fortunately my burglar guide had already started back toward the saloon, so that he did not hear my uncharitable exclamation. I am glad now that it was so.

If I could go in, attend the woman, and escape without listening to that inevitable, unoriginal hard-luck story, but — well, the impulse of my training kept me moving toward the house. It differed from the other shanties by reason of a high foundation wall which allowed for living quarters in the basement. The high front steps led up to Red Riordan's rooms, which were now dark. I concluded this must be a time when he was "too much wanted" to visit his known haunt.

The basement door was opened for me by a thin, awkward girl of twelve or thirteen. The first room through which we passed was dark and miserably cold, with a damp smell. It turned out that the only means of warmth these people had was the cook stove. And there in a corner of the kitchen, lying on a cot, was the patient. Her fever-brightened eyes stared deliriously at me, while the tell-tale blue lips were drawn back from

uneven teeth as she mumbled some incoherent prayer. I knew it was pneumonia even before I stooped to feel her thin, desperately thin, pulse.

Of course my heart ought to have been touched to the banishment of all selfish considerations; but just then the daughter, in a shrill, rasping voice, began to rattle out a record of all the misfortunes which had befallen their family during her recollection. The doctor, my partner, would know. He was a good man — I guessed how good.

There was one other person sitting in the room, a very inert and dejected-appearing man. His back was humped and his head hung so low that I could not see his face, although I suspected he was furtively inspecting me through his shaggy eyebrows. His big, ugly hands hung listlessly between his knees. So this, I thought with disgust, was one of the "shovel stiffs."

Then I turned upon the girl to stop her chatter. "Who told you to send for me?" I demanded.

She glanced toward the man, but he supplied no answer and a short silence ensued. I broke it.

"Look here," I exclaimed, my pent-up irritation gaining full control of me. "Your mother needs a doctor badly, but the doctor also needs money badly. This sort of thing takes up all my time and I've simply got to take a stand toward you people in this neighborhood. If you had use for a lawyer you'd expect to pay him a retainer before he touched your case. I insist on something like that now before I open my satchel."

I hadn't intended to put the matter quite so brutally, but I suppose my very shame in the speech brought out the raw words. Of course, I had no real intention of deserting the patient. Moreover, although I stood looking at the girl, I really intended this bit of bluffing for the shiftless-looking man across the room. From the corner of my eye, I thought I saw him lift his head with a start, as I spoke; but when I turned full toward him, he was again gazing at the floor, very intently at one spot.

"How about you?" I snapped. "Likely you've soaked up enough heat in this widow's house to be a little obligated. Sup-

pose you dig down in your clothes and show me something that will make my night's work worth while. Can you?"

"Maybe," he answered.

There was some quality in that quiet voice which did not fittingly belong to a humped, indolent figure. But immediately this figure began to change and harmonize with the smooth hardness of the tone. The man began to arise. I say began; I suppose he was quick in the act, but it seemed to my startled wits as though he occupied seconds in coming to his great height. He was lank and raw-boned without a trace of awkwardness; gorilla-like and equally graceful, as you judge grace by perfect muscular control and simple fearlessness. His red stubbled chin hung under very high cheek bones; and the eyes were palest blue with a queer little dancing light. It was Red Riordan.

"Maybe," he repeated, musingly, "maybe I c'n dig up somethin' wot'll make it worth yer while to stick on the job." His big, boney hand sank into one side pocket of his tightly buttoned coat. Probably the lining had been torn out, giving ready access to his belt, for he drew therefrom a long, black revolver of the ugly frontier type.

The first instant, I felt that this was all stage play. Then the feeling left me and I could not get it back. I knew this man was not an actor, nor even a bluffer. I saw he was an out and out savage of a sort commanding respect. He did not point the gun at me, but glanced down at it with a meditative smile which just elevated one corner of his wide mouth. One of his long fingers was thrust through the trigger guard while he twirled the huge weapon so that it laid on the back of his hand and slid down his brawny wrist to pop up on the other side. It reminded me of a horrible, black reptile writhing in the grasp of its charmer. I was fascinated by the metal thing. My eye noted that the trigger had been taken off, which indicated the habit of a man who could shoot more quickly by merely snapping the hammer.

"Doctor," began the man — he had squinted one eye, but the other opened round and stared at me unwinking — "Doctor, you-all just git busy now an' do a little doctorin'. You doctor the best you know how. You doctor your damndest!"

Somehow, I didn't seem to be so much concerned about my life, right then, as I was for my routed dignity. On this man's plane I cut an ignominious figure, so I sought composure by climbing my professional prominence.

"You may not understand," I said, "that this woman has had pneumonia for seven days. She's right on the brink of her crisis. She's had no medical help and it may be all my doctoring, to-night, can't pull her through. She's very likely to die before morning. I suppose I'll be free to go home, if she does." I added this testily, with the surprising effect of bringing a slow grin upon Riordan's face. He spoke with a queer mixture of Irish brogue and southern mountainer dialect.

"Ef she cashes in befo' mawnin' you'll sho go home; leastwise the preachers calls it home. You c'n name it Home, or Heaven, or Hell, or Over Jordan; but you'll start sudden."

This was the first actually spoken threat. I hotly desired to meet it with disdain. I tried to increase my courage by thinking of my own wrongs; how I had paid nearly all my money to share a practice which yielded little return. I tried to image the sordid, inappreciative neighborhood. But this room where I stood now seemed to have become disassociated from the outer city, and the moment was not related to any past season of experience. I could as well have imagined myself in a remote mountain cabin, or even a hut in the early wilds of Britain whence originated the blood in this modern desperado.

Riordan sat down again, humping loosely as before with head drooped; but the pistol continued to twirl about his hand, now and then for a moment nestling in his palm.

I turned and stepped to the cot, where I knelt beside the patient and commenced a more thorough examination. She began to appear to me as a bravely struggling woman and not a mere pauper. The quick expirations of her breath told of serious congestion. I got out my stethoscope and found her lungs thickly impeding the passage of blood. Then I listened to the labored throb of her right heart, whose terrific task it was to force the flow. A sound came to my ear which made me start. I turned to Riordan.

"This woman," I said, "has an organic affection which may

possibly put her heart out of action any instant. I'm surely not to be held responsible for what was acquired years ago."

The man made no answer, but the black muzzle dipped under his hand and poked its nose up on the other side. Then I understood what sort of night's vigil I had before me.

The lapse of time did not impress me as being either long or short. I lost all sense of it. For my concentration became so intense that I fairly projected my mind within the woman's chest where a fierce battle was being waged. The disease was quickly approaching a crisis. It was bound to occur before morning. At last it seemed to me that the state of her lungs was improving; but at the same time the defective heart showed signs of weakening.

I was startled from my mental abstraction by a cry of terror from the woman's daughter. "Red! Oh, Red!" she screamed. "Come 'ere quick. Look at ma. She looks different. I never seen her look so before."

I heard the man's chair scrape on the floor as he got up, and the scuff of his heel as he took a step. Then I suffered a brain reaction and my head began to swim. I arose without looking at any of them and found my way to a window. The sky had cleared in the night and it surprised me to see the first gray light of dawn.

Red Riordan's voice spoke very quietly from behind me. He asked a question: "What does it mean, Doc, when they breaks into a sweat?"

"What did it mean! My heart bounded with relief. I hurried back to the cot and found all the other favorable symptoms.

"She's turned the mark," I said. "She's coming back. Let her sleep, now. That's all; just let her sleep."

"Which you'd be willing to do yourself, I reckon," said the man. "You c'n go now."

It suddenly occurred to me that I wanted to say something to this outlaw; to frame some excuse. I looked at the ever-present glint of his light-tinted eyes. Then I turned away without speaking. There was nothing to explain.

My hand was upon the door when a voice called me back. For

the first time it was harsh and grating. "Forgot somethin', didn't ye?" He reached toward his belt.

With a great effort I restrained my glance from following his movement and compelled my eyes to gaze steadily into his. It struck me that they were lit for an instant by a kinder light.

Something was thrust into my palm. The outlaw suddenly reentered the house. I opened my hand and saw therein a twenty-dollar bill. My face grew hot with shame. I wanted to give back the money. But Red Riordan's parting words were still in my ears, "Keep t' change, Doc."



The War God's Wing.*

BY ROSE MILLS POWERS.



N avenue of centuries-old evergreen trees led to the gate of the abandoned Buddhist temple.

Situated on a slight elevation, overlooking the gray old Chinese city on one side and the junk-lined river on the other, it was a charming spot, and its foreign owners often congratulated themselves that they had been able to secure it as a residence. For years the temple had been neglected and its beautiful lacquered halls were falling to ruin when it was saved from ending its existence in a rubbish heap by being built over into a mission compound. The four large rooms surrounding the outer courtyard, which once echoed to the ceaseless chanting of "O-mi-to" were now used as a school in which fourscore or more Chinese boys were taught the rudiments of Western learning.

The outer courtyard opened through a tiled pergola on a terraced garden, just now a riot of peony and pomegranate bloom. Quaintly stunted trees and a rockery studded with ferns added to the Oriental beauty of the place, but the bed of blossoms nearest to the bungalow whither the garden paths led might have been from any New England dooryard. Its marigolds and sweet peas looked as out of place as the cozy, shaker rocker drawn near it, in which a sweet faced young woman sat, her brows knitted over a household account book. The transformation of the ancient shrine into a semi-foreign compound was due to the efforts of two young missionaries, David and Deborah Bliss. To them and their eight-year-old daughter Ruth, the old temple with its strange surroundings was a dearly loved home, invested as it was with countless tender associations of their isolated life in the inland city of Yan Ning.

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It was late afternoon on the last day of June. The scholars had left for their homes, and Deborah had seized the first opportunity after hours of teaching to go over her accounts and inspect her larder. It was her invariable custom to order from Nanking, down-stream some hundred miles, a monthly supply of edibles that could only be bought in the cities where foreign shops abounded. Deborah always planned to have a generous surplus on hand, and her survey of the pantry had surprised her. There was only a very small amount of any of these supplies left on the shelves. Several boxes of biscuits and tinned fish and meat which she knew had not been used on the table had also disappeared.

"I can't understand it," she reflected, "unless Lei Yen has stolen them and I can't believe it of him."

Poor Deborah looked distressed. It was a sad blow for her to have to suspect her trusted cook of seven years' standing, but as he alone of the kitchen staff had access to the pantry, suspicion seemed to point to him. She sought Lei Yen in the compound kitchen. To her amazement he made no denial of having taken the missing supplies, only shaking his head as she repeatedly demanded their restoration. Her indignation knew no bounds at his stubborn refusal, and with flushed cheeks and shining eyes, she ordered him to pack his belongings and leave the house. Something in the look the old servant cast on her as he left the room smote Deborah's heart, and she felt a sudden desire to call him back as she watched his bent figure pass the gate to the servants' quarters. She crushed back what seemed a sentimental impulse and busied herself with the preparation of the evening meal.

Off the first terrace of the garden, and built on a lower plane than the apartment used by the missionaries, was a large room, curiously built into the side of the hill. This was used as a storeroom, chiefly because almost half of the floor space was taken up by an enormous idol—the Buddhist God of War. The image had been too unwieldy to cart away to another temple at the time of the sale to the foreigners, standing some fifteen feet high and ten feet broad. In spite of its abandonment by the Chinese, and their seeming indifference to its fate, the

new tenants had hesitated to destroy it, fearing its mutilation at their hands might fan to flame the ever latent spark of superstition in the native mind. So it came about that the great idol in his by-gone bravery of gilt cuirass and two-horned helmet still scowled from his forsaken shrine and menaced with his curved sword the household goods piled at his feet, and "The War God's Wing," as the place was called, became a favorite retreat for Ruth to play in on rainy days.

It was the day before Deborah discovered the shrinkage in her larder that the child had encountered Lei Yen in the room of the idol. She had been startled by his sudden appearance, for she had not heard him enter. His face was very grave and his manner peculiar as he drew her to one side. He spoke low into her ear, pointing at the War God as he did so. Ruth's eyes widened at his words and when she slipped into the courtyard some minutes later it was with a quickened breath and heightened color.

"Remember, it is to save my life; do not speak till the right time." The old man spoke slowly and earnestly.

The child's lip quivered. "I won't forget," she promised, and turned in the direction of the bungalow. She did not skip up the terraces as she usually did and once she looked around as if in fear and choked back a sob that rose unbidden to her lips.

Deborah and Ruth ate their evening meal alone, Deborah glancing continually out of the window in hope of seeing her husband's stalwart form swing into the garden. He had gone to confer with his station colleague, Dr. Warren, whose compound stood near the west gate of the city. There had been anti-foreign disturbances in a neighboring town, and the Yan Ning missionaries were somewhat uneasy as to their own safety. The riots had started from such a simple thing as the dusting of her windows by a woman missionary who was also a zealous housekeeper. Her vigorous shaking of the dustcloth had been interpreted by some superstitious loafers who watched her to be signals to invisible celestial powers who held the "foreign devils" in special favor.

The remembrance of these disturbances, and a peculiar ner-

vousness which had taken possession of Ruth, caused Deborah to feel doubly anxious as night drew on and David did not appear. She had just despatched the table boy to seek news of him when a hurried step rang on the flagging, and her husband threw open the door — a dishevelled figure, his white linen clothes begrimed and dusty.

"Quick, Deborah, we must get out of this at once!" he gasped to his wife's mute look of inquiry. "Yes, it's an uprising. They are busy at Warren's compound now, setting fire to it. I only got away by a miracle and they are on our track. Come, quick!"

While he was speaking, Deborah, with stricken face and trembling hands, dragged from a closet a small satchel.

"I prepared this after we heard about the riots," she said, quietly. "Here are our valuables, some medicine and clothing and this —" She handed David his revolver. He looked his gratitude at her forethought and then the three clung together as they gave a swift heart-broken glance about the home they were leaving, probably forever. The man spoke rapidly of his plans. Under cover of darkness they were to steal away to the river bank, where they would hide in the reeds until a friendly junkman could be found to carry them down-stream to safety. It was their only course, for the uprising had been so sudden, and the soldiers of the magistrate, sulky Manchu banner-men, were not to be trusted for protection.

The missionary's lips moved in an agonized prayer as he cautiously opened the door, leading his wife and child by the hand. As the night air, heavy with the odor of flowers, swept into the room, Ruth ceased her frightened sobbing.

"Oh, Papa, wait! The War God! The War God! Come and I'll show you!" She sprang down the terrace steps, beckoning to them to follow her.

"David!" she's hysterical! She's been acting strangely all day." The frightened note in his wife's voice sent David hurrying after Ruth, who by this time had crossed the threshold of the War God's Wing. In the semi-darkness he saw her run to the side of the idol, and suddenly, to his amazement, a door in the image swung open. *It was hollow.* He climbed in after

the child and groping about in the interior of the idol, discovered that it concealed an opening at its base that led into a hillside cavern. The place was dry and airy, pointing to some outlet at the rear, the nature of which he could not at once determine.

The man's heart gave a leap of joy. Here was temporary shelter far safer than the reed beds of the river afforded. He staggered with sudden weakness, so great was the relief that possessed him, but Deborah caught him ere he fell. There was even now a clamor at the outer gate, and the little family knew the rioters were at hand. They also knew that a door so cunningly contrived as to have escaped their detection after years of observation would bear the scrutiny of their pursuers, and the presence of the War God would insure this isolated building at least from fire.

They clung together as the noise of the mob rose and fell and the sickening crash of china and glass smote their ears. They almost ceased to breathe when a detachment of the rioters, yelling like fiends, broke into the storeroom in their search of the place. The sight of the War God seemed to rouse them to even greater fury, which seemed presently to turn into a dispute among themselves. David, who had thrust his wife and child into the cavern, listened to the altercation and to his great joy gathered that it was decided that the precincts of the War God must be held sacred, therefore the buildings should neither be razed nor burned. In view of the fact that the foreign family had sheltered the idol so long they should only suffer imprisonment in event of capture. It was agreed to continue the search in the reed beds of the river and all other likely hiding places. Friendly natives and servants of the foreigners, if found, were to be questioned under torture. To the barbaric music of drums and tom-toms the company departed.

In the gray dawn, after a long period of quiet, David, pistol in hand, stepped from the strange shelter. The War God's Wing was deserted, the door into the garden closed. He did not quite dare to look out of the one small window, nor did he care just then to see the sickening wreck of their household effects with which he knew the terraces were strewn. On returning to the

secret chamber he struck a light and looked about him. He was eager to explore the cavern in order to be assured of safety from attack in the rear.

As the match flared up, Deborah appeared at the cave entrance with Ruth asleep in her arms. She sank wearily to the ground, but her face brightened at her husband's reassuring whisper. As her glance searched the place she suddenly caught at David's arm and pointed to the floor.

"And I thought he was a thief," she whispered, excitedly. "Look! All the missing supplies."

She hastily told her husband of her suspicions against the cook and her dismissal of him.

"Now I understand it all," she continued, "piecing it out from Ruth's disconnected wanderings in her sleep to-night. He showed her how to open the spring, making her promise to say nothing till he was gone, for fear we would question him. He wanted to be able to say truthfully that he had said nothing to either of us of a hiding place, and, having discovered this accidentally, planned it all out for our protection."

With thankful hearts they partook of a little refreshment and drank from the large demijohn of water. Further search revealed a roll of quilts and matting, also a supply of candles and matches.

"We are really prepared for a siege," said Deborah, and the first smile for many hours curved her lips. As she unrolled a quilt to wrap about the sleeping child a letter written in Chinese fell at her feet:

Lei Yen to his dear and honorable Master and Mistress,
Greeting!

The heart of the War God is not all evil if it can give shelter to your noble persons. I go now to my native village, the Market Town of the Crows, until the fury of many foolish hearts is over. When the storm has passed, the snail comes out of his shell. So will I shortly return by the outer entrance to the cave, where by junk you may see to the protection of the flowery flag.

The honorable mistress knows now that he who has served her for seven years is no thief.

Felicitations,

LEI YEN.

Deborah's voice trembled over the concluding words, but her eyes shone and the haggard lines in David's face relaxed.

"I guess we've more than a fighting chance," he said, brightly. "Talk about the faithfulness of Chinese servants! There's an example for you! Now I am going to explore that cave."

The underground passage seemed to be of natural formation, although occasional rough-hewn steps testified to man's part in its construction. David had descended, as he judged, to near river level when the cave ended in a stone wall. He was puzzled for a moment as he faced the barrier. Then the lap-lap of water near at hand suggested to him that this was no doubt part of the age-worn retaining wall, a semi-ruined portion of which stretched along the river bank at the foot of the compound grounds.

The missionary examined the wall closely; chinks here and there in the masonry let in the air on his face although they were not large enough for him to look through with any degree of satisfaction.

"I suppose one of these stones is on a pivot hinge," he reflected, pounding vigorously on the largest boulder. It yielded under his forceful pressure and suddenly swung out, disclosing to his peering eyes the familiar river scene that he had looked upon for years. He quickly replaced the stone, but one glance had located the place for him. It was the customary mooring of the friendly junkman on whose craft the foreigners most often took passage for points up or down stream. David hurried back. He could hardly wait to tell Deborah the good news.

Lei Yen was true to his word. A few days later, under cover of darkness, he helped the refugees in their escape to the junk which carried them to safety.

Months afterward, when it was possible for them to return to the scene of their anxious vigils, David and Deborah looked with interest on the fierce visage of the War God.

"It's almost like greeting an old friend, isn't it, David?" and Deborah smiled into her husband's face.

Lei Yen, passing that moment, market basket on arm, smiled, too, at sight of them and also over his own musings.

Had not his honorable employers declared to him that their home would be his as long as he lived, thereby freeing his mind forever of the fear of a poverty-stricken old age in his ancestral hovel at the Market Town of the Crows?



An Unwelcome Birthday Gift.*

BY GENERAL H. M. CHITTENDEN.



I was my forty-ninth birthday. Believing that the best way to celebrate such an anniversary is to make it a proper example for the days that are to follow, I had gone energetically about my regular work as soon as breakfast was over. Inevitable regrets at the swiftness of the years and tender memories of their passage hung over my spirit for the moment, but were quickly dispelled as I resumed at my desk the routine of daily duty.

In the bunch of mail awaiting attention there were the usual wishes for "happy returns of the day," but the chief attraction was a tiny unstamped parcel evidently placed there without the aid of the United States postal authorities. If the donor had been present she would, I fear, have detected a frown of displeasure as I drew from the package an exquisite gold watch faultlessly inscribed on the inner cover with my name and the date.

The truth is that its big silver predecessor, which I had worn since long before we were married, had become, in my good wife's eyes, shamefully out of keeping with our position in life, and she had often begged me to get rid of it. "It was all right when you couldn't afford better," she would say; and there the matter usually rested, for she was tenderly indulgent of my whims and fancies. The situation, however, had recently taken acute form as the result of a visit from a college chum, Mr. Dresswell, who commented rather facetiously upon my "singular attachment for that old turnip" which I had carried since "before we entered college together." Strange I did not realize that I had "outgrown it." It was a last straw, and the beautiful birthday gift was the result.

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Convinced that this was really the finale of a long and intimate companionship, I involuntarily took the old watch from my pocket, opening, closing, and fumbling it in a way that must have revealed my tender affection for it. For it was indeed a bond of friendship, or more truly a debt of gratitude, that gave rise to this "singular attachment"; and whether it was well founded may be judged from the few incidents of its history which I shall now relate.

Thirty-two years ago it was — thirty-two that very day; for I bought it on my seventeenth birthday. I smile now at the mental struggle which that transaction cost me, but it was no laughing matter then. I was teaching school to earn my way through college, and every dollar of the twenty-five which this necessary part of my equipment cost me seemed larger than a thousand would now. Not without many decisions and retractions, and with questions enough to have sorely taxed the dealer's good nature, was the step finally taken, and the relationship, which has meant so much to my life, begun.

But if the sacrifice was great, the value to me of my new possession became greater still. At once it assumed a large place in my daily life. With a never-ceasing fascination I have studied its habits and character until I know them better than those of any other friend. A faithful servant, it has scrupulously reminded me of the progress of the hours; a true philosopher, it has diligently taught what that progress implies. Often we debate topics of mutual interest — for you should know that my watch has the power of speech, intelligible to myself at least. Our discussions are not always harmonious — sometimes, I fear, acrimonious — but whatever their character in this respect, there is no record that my watch ever came out second best.

Very early I discovered its most prominent trait, which was to view life exactly as its master did not. When I am fast it is slow, and whatever I want to accomplish quickly it always tries to put off as long as possible. The climax of this discord came at the time when I was paying suit to her who was now about to prove my companion's undoing. I half believe that a lingering spirit of revenge may have had something to do with her recent action; though she never complained at the time and used to

laugh at my exasperation. But I—to find my hours shrunken to minutes and seconds when in her presence and stretched into years and centuries when out of it—surely I was justified in the resentment I felt toward this otherwise dutiful servant. Often I threatened to be rid of it forever—but then, where find another free of its defects?

The same propensity has always cropped out, though in no other quite so strenuous circumstances. Once it led to a spirited colloquy between us in which as usual victory did not rest upon my banners.

“Why is it, my watch,” I asked, “that you persist in always doing just as I do not want you to? If you must be now fast and then slow, why not be so when I would have you? Surely faithful service should be more considerate of an employer’s wishes.”

“I protest, dear master, that I am neither fast nor slow, but unvarying as the motion of the stars above you. You fancy that I do not move at all—now—because the time seems long which separates you from a prospective happy event. But in yonder prison there is a convict whose last day on earth is drawing to a close. Do you think that *he* would complain because these hands move too slowly? Ah, master, you are both wrong. I am unchangeable ever.”

“Even if so—and I have my own opinion—what is the advantage? When I am waiting in a noisome railway station for a belated train, or am suffering from any of the manifold ills of life, why should time move for me the same as when every moment is bringing its gift of joy? Why, on the one hand, prolong life to make it miserable, and on the other, shorten it to keep it from remaining happy? If you could give your character a little elasticity, you would contribute more to the sum of human happiness.”

This sophistry was a little vexing to my watch and it replied rather bluntly: “A conclusive reason, not to mention others, for the line of conduct which is so offensive to you is that you yourself imperfectly understand your best good. It often happens that what you have thought a grievous delay has proven an actual blessing; and time and again you have thanked that fate

which, with apparent malice, has brought your pleasures to an end sooner than you wished. No greater calamity could befall than to make me simply a register of your passing fancies. Human life must have a balance wheel—to check its hasty impulses and to spur it on when it lags unduly. Such a balance wheel am I. Tick, tick, tick, with inexorable constancy whether men will or not. Is it a Romeo pining for his Juliet? I move no faster for him. Is it this terrified criminal in presence of the dread scaffold? For him there is no delay.

“And so I am never at peace with the world. Human language is full of such misnomers as ‘lingering years’ and ‘fleeing years’, ‘winged hours’ and ‘lagging hours’, ‘flying time’ and ‘snail-paced time’, and many others which denote what individuals momentarily feel but not at all what I really am.”

“There is another consideration,” I rejoined, seeking a more vulnerable point of attack, “which has not a little to do with your being ‘never at peace with the world.’ A vital defect in your make-up, my good watch, is that which compels you to move always in one direction. You are but half a watch, at best. When your hands shall move both ways with equal facility; when you shall respond to the universal prayer, ‘Backward, roll backward, O Time in thy flight!’ when you shall take me back to the vernal atmosphere of childhood, and enable me to look upon life again with the joy of a mind just opening to the miracle of existence—then will I gladly relinquish all other possessions and count myself happy with you alone.”

Catching the fervent longing with which these words were spoken, my watch replied:

“Truly, dear master, I would that I could do this. But hard as it may seem to be borne ever away from the fountain of youth, it is still yourself that are incessantly urging me on. As a child you were ever yearning for youth and manhood. When manhood came, you were still looking to some object a little farther on. Even now, disillusioned as you are, your gaze is fixed steadfastly ahead. And so it will continue to be; your real desire is always to be moving on, though momentary fancy now and then would carry you back over the way you have come.”

On another occasion when I had taken offense at some fancied

grievance, and had petulantly remarked that my watch overestimated its own importance, I stirred up more of a tempest than I had expected.

"Tell me, master, if you can, of something more important. Even now as we speak comes the sound of a bell from yonder tower. It is one o'clock p. m. Other bells and whistles carry the signal far and wide. Millions of human beings at this moment resume their work. Millions of school children hasten to their desks. Once more humanity takes up its appointed task. What captain ever commanded such a host or received such implicit obedience? Even kings obey me. Wars are waged and battles fought with myself as impartial umpire. The commercial world, with its steamships and railroads, moves only by my permission. Every situation, every intelligent act of human life is dependent upon me.

"Not less important is my office as historian and prophet. 'Without chronology there can be no history. By my aid the experience of the past is set down in orderly sequence for the guidance of succeeding generations. By my aid also humanity lays its plans for the future. Foretelling the changes of the tides in the thousand harbors of the globe, the progress of the seasons, and such a range of events that ancient prophecy pales in comparison — in short the whole future regulation of human affairs — is made possible only by my cooperation.'

"But let me come down to the humble sphere of our mutual relations. Is there any other friend whom you consult so often and whose advice you follow so unquestioningly or with such good results? Go back to your arduous struggle for a liberal education. Often when discouragements seemed too great and you were about to falter my peremptory summons scattered the clouds of dejection and held you firmly to your purpose.

"And as we come down the years there was this joyous milestone in life's journey which I remember well:

'Christ Church, Wednesday Afternoon, Half Past Five O'Clock'

Even then you could not dispense with me.

"Surely, too, you recall that other day, also long ago, when

you took me from your pocket and wanted to know 'what in the world' I was 'making such a noise for — ticking loud enough to be heard all over the house?' In your own joy you forgot the good fortune which had befallen me. Not to every watch comes the high privilege of noting the moment when a human soul enters upon its terrestrial existence.

"What a happiness to me, dear master, did this little waif from the invisible world become! And what a wonder to her was the mystery hidden beneath my glittering surface! Sweetest of all experiences were the innocent rough-and-tumbles that I underwent in her chirping, gleeful frolics. Surely the true Kingdom is of such as these.

"But now those happy days come back to me like phantom memories of joys unreal. Ever before my vision stands her bed of suffering and near it in silent anguish fond loved ones awaiting an end which they cannot defer. Close by the little ear I lie while a parting smile illumines her face and I catch the faint whisper of her last sad 'Tih! Tih!' Oh, my master, fate has brought me many a painful duty, but no other so cruel as the speeding of that sad moment."

Is it strange that these intimate relations have made this friendship for my watch stronger with the passing years until it has ripened into an unselfish love? But there are still weightier reasons for its abiding claim to my gratitude and affection. It has not been a passive mentor only, but a vigilant and sometimes imperious guardian. When I have drifted from my moorings in quest of idle pleasure; when the time due my home or work has gone to those alluring evils which frequent the highway to ruin; when the pride of social success and the cheap flattery of sycophant associates have silenced the call of duty, this faithful friend has prodded my conscience in its own telling way and has saved my wayward craft from many an impending disaster. Its solicitude has not always been welcome; often quite unwelcome; but its patience has never failed. Only once has it shown signs of discouragement, or made anything like a personal appeal; but that once I shall not forget.

"What am I for in your life?" it asked in evident dejection at my wanton perverseness.

"What for? Why, to tell me the time of day; when to rise, when to retire, when to eat, when to go to the train — in short, you are the trusted regulator of my hours."

"I fear that is about your idea of it; that you fail to grasp those higher purposes which alone make my possession valuable. Am I then only your stomach to tell you when to eat, or your feet to get you promptly to the train?"

"Go on, peevish critic. Tell me what your real office is. I am ready to listen."

Reminding me with unflattering candor of my limitations, yet placing its seal of approval upon my ambitions, it commented, not without "amazement," upon the methods I was using to overcome the one and realize the other. "The weaknesses of character," it said, "are not altogether those ordinarily classed as such. The most elusive of all, and the most dangerous because the father of all the rest, is this very squandering of time in which you are now becoming so expert. It is only the few, whom nature and circumstances endow with that harmony of gifts which makes great achievement possible. Physical health, mental capacity, the environment of life, are conditions which are fixed not by us but for us and must be accepted for what they are worth. For no two are they the same; for very few are they full of promise. But there is *one* gift which comes to all alike — the gift of Time. Herein all men are equal, for time has no degrees of quality. It is as good now as it ever was. It is the same in Patagonia as in London. Bacon and Goethe had no finer grade than the humblest peasant. Use of time is therefore the only true criterion. Christ did not require from the servant with one talent the same return as from him with five. He required only an equal effort. So men, with infinitely varying capacities and advantages, may not be responsible for the character of their opportunities, but they *are* responsible for the way in which those opportunities are improved.

"But the true measure of opportunity is the way in which time is spent. He who, like you, looks at his watch with no other purpose than to know when to go to dinner or to the train, misses its real value in his life. But he who looks thoughtfully is ever reminded of the precept of the great Teacher — Use well that

which is given, and delay not, for the hour of reckoning will surely come.

"Consider, dear master, how you go about quite unconscious that already you are in the toils of that most insidious enemy — Procrastination, the 'thief of time,' to whom the fewest ever escape the payment of tribute. His artifices are numberless, but the most amazing and successful is that whereby he deludes with the notion that there is some special virtue in first days of the week or month, in birthdays, and especially in New Year's days; and that the present time is least fitted of all for turning over a new leaf. Repel his plausible and crafty advances. Do *now* that which is given you, for it is an infallible truth that the passing moment holds the secret of life."

"Eternal vigilance like this," I protested, "would turn life into mere drudgery, and success upon such terms would not be worth its cost. Must I forego my companions and pleasures and begrudge all moments not devoted to strenuous toil?"

This insincere plaint was taken at its real worth. "You assume what I have not said," replied my watch. "I would deprive you of no legitimate pleasure. Among life's choicest moments are those spent in the society of others. Isolation corrupts scarcely less than bad companionship. Contact with others and the emulative standard of good associations fill the ruts in life's highway which may otherwise degenerate into dangerous gutters. Attend your club, enjoy your games, indulge every form of higher pastime that comes your way. All these things are essential. Only —"

"Now you are talking in paradoxes."

"Only remember" — taking no note of my interruption — "Use them; let not them use you. Ever be ready to say enough. Many a time, in the midst of your shallow successes, you have felt dissatisfied — as you do now. A gentle voice has whispered that all is not well; that you are throwing opportunity away. Then comes the fatal counselor with his false comfort. You think of the ten, twenty or thirty years before you. Surely there is time to redeem these trifling losses. Does it ever occur to you that years — life itself — are made up of moments saved or lost? How can one build securely out of ruined material?"

"Dear watch!" I exclaimed, for bravado could hold out no longer, "Call not *me* master any more. Let me be thy servant. Command, and I will obey. Teach me wisely to use this gift of time that I, in honoring the Giver, may honor thee."

Perhaps my attachment for this loyal companion may now seem not so singular after all, nor myself unreasonable that I would have it ever near — guiding, expostulating, praising — until for me the voices of life flow into the endless silence. And often, as I think of the unseen realm beyond, I find myself wondering how it will serve me there. Surely not as now with its remorseless "ever on"; but rather will the past and future be as one, and these patient hands, having run their course, will rest at the meridian of an eternal present.



The Day Which Never Existed.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.



AFTER you have read a few thrilling South Sea yarns of raging typhoons and desperate shipwrecks, with the attendant horror of being cast up on a desert island inhabited by savage head hunters, it may seem stretching a point to affirm that, granted a seaworthy vessel intelligently navigated, ocean risks fall considerably below those on land. To prove it there are statistics. In an afternoon walk a score of accidents may happen from which you are entirely secure on shipboard. But for the mere traveler by sea, against this must be set dangers particularly appropriate to the old saying regarding a Forked-Tailed Individual and unemployed hands. For example, he who goes into the smoking-room would do well to take heed of the official notice that, if not Satan himself, some of his followers may be lurking there. This is usually written in such plain language that there was really no excuse for Barker. None at all!

When the *City of Seattle* set forth westward bound across the Pacific almost any one could have informed Barker that the two pleasant fellows he foregathered with were morally no better than ocean sharks. But he was so absurdly unsophisticated, was that little man Barker. He told all about his affairs, of how an uncle had left him a pile, and that \$15,000 of it was deposited with the purser. Messrs. Flint and Needham, the two agreeable fellows aforesaid, became deeply interested and stimulated further particulars. Barker was apparently eager to confide. He was going to buy a mine in Australia, though he knew nothing about mining, but he trusted implicitly the man on the other side. A point which he did not think it worth while

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to disclose was that he had made the round trip across the Pacific before.

Now it can easily be understood how two sincere sharpers felt in honor bound to prevent the man on the other side robbing Barker. That would have been culpable negligence on their part, a disgrace for which they would not have liked to be held accountable. Therefore they proceeded after their usual method to land him in a game, having previously verified his statement that the \$15,000 was in the purser's safe. But Barker suddenly developed a conscientious objection to games of chance, arguing that his deceased uncle held all such to be a profitless waste of time. He declared he much preferred to hear them discuss mission work in penitentiaries, with which they appeared to be familiar. To persuade, entice, and nerve him to alter his mind was like trying to induce a mule to eat oysters. He drew back every time.

In the process over two-thirds of the voyage was consumed, and the two agreeable fellows had almost given up hope, when a change of disposition was noticed in Barker. First he thought he would like to see how the game they proposed was played, then if it would be possible for him to learn so that he might not make an exhibition of himself. A new hope was born in the conspirators of the green cloth. Great was the encouragement given, earnest the instruction, and most flattering the comments on the skill Barker displayed. For a beginner, Gee Whiz! it was astonishing. Considering that aces and kings were shuffled into his hands, it is not surprising he did fairly well, even to the extent of winning a few dollars. In a perfectly natural transition of opinion he became quite enthusiastic, and in that spirit early one morning made a rather curious proposal.

"I would like to play quite a long game," he suggested, "just to see if my luck holds good, with a time limit fixed ahead, say — to-night at lights out."

"All right," eagerly agreed Flint. "We're willing."

"I say lights out to-night," explained Barker, "because I have a habit of squaring my accounts once a month, on the 27th, and this is the 26th. I invariably pay all debts due on

that date — the anniversary of my lamented uncle's death — and expect others to settle any sums which may be owing to me. That enables me to start another month with a clean sheet.

"Good idea!" exclaimed Needham, with a side wink at his companion. "That's the way to keep things straightened out. I remember learning something like that when I was a kid at school out of a copybook."

The expression on Mr. Needham's face seemed to recall a beautiful childish memory.

"In this case," went on Barker, "I feel rather particular about it, because I might, of course, lose a few dollars and —"

"Hardly think it likely from the way you've been doing," put in Flint. "Looks as if we'd have to pay up."

"Well, in case I should be so unfortunate," argued Barker, "it is understood we settle on that day and no other — Thursday the 27th. You see, I make a rule never to draw money except on that date, and the purser has instructions not to break the seal of my packet until then."

"Oh, all right, if it suits you," agreed Flint, while Needham nodded. "It's usual to put up the money as we go along, but I guess we can make an exception in your case."

They thought they had sized up their man, and that timidity of conscience would impel him to pay without a murmur according to his regular schedule.

"Thursday, the 27th, then, is settlement day," repeated Barker with a smile. "It's just as well to have a matter like this clearly decided, because if the ship should happen to be wrecked on the 28th, I should feel very badly if I went to the bottom of the sea owing any one money."

"So would we," laughed the other men in chorus, Flint adding in a jovial mood: "Don't let a little thing like that worry you. If you owe us money on the 27th, and we don't see you pay up on that date, we'll call the debt off. Will that comfort you?"

"Perfectly," responded Barker. "That is exactly what I mean. Now I am ready to chance my luck."

For the reason given that mental concentration could be bet-

ter exerted in private, it was agreed to play out the game in Flint and Needham's stateroom. To the seclusion of which place the three adjourned, where they substituted a steamer trunk for a table and sat upon stateroom stools. Then the game was opened, proceeding cautiously at first on the part of the conspirators, so that their simple-minded victim might not be alarmed by too sudden losses. But what surprised Flint and Needham was the indifference displayed by Barker. When the lunch hour came, and the steward was summoned to bring in a bite, Barker merely smiled when informed that luck had gone against him to the extent of \$840.

"Oh, well, I can't expect to have luck on my side all the time, can I?" he asked innocently.

They agreed with him that such had been their own unhappy experience in times past, and made renewed efforts to land that \$15,000 in the purser's safe. Thus, while the *City of Seattle* slid along on an even keel, Flint and Needham piled up their gains by fifties and hundreds, and all the time Barker sat on his stool with as much ease as if peanuts and not dollars were slipping from him. In this way they played through the dinner hour, and on until the four bells at 10 P. M. were struck, being also the signal for lights out.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Flint, reckoning up the final score. "I'll be swtiched if I ever saw a man have such a run of hard luck! You are out \$9,752, Barker, but remember it was you who proposed the game."

"I don't mind," returned Barker cheerfully, rubbing his hands together, which were a bit stiff from handling the cards so long. "I'm willing to lose a little money, for I thoroughly enjoyed the game. As my uncle used to say, real pleasure cannot be measured by price, therefore he must have been wrong about games of chance being profitless. As agreed, I shall settle with you, gentlemen, on the 27th.

"All right," agreed both in the most friendly manner.

Then Barker walked away, and Flint stared at Needham.

"What do you think of him?" questioned Flint.

"The easiest vein we ever struck."

"Just a mine of money. We'll have to dig into him again.

It's as well we didn't clean up all his \$15,000 at a stroke. That might have made him suspicious. As it is, he thinks we're dead on the level."

With which gratifying reflection they turned in for the night.

The next morning Flint and Needham climbed on deck early, where they found Barker talking to the first mate. When he caught sight of them, he left the mate's side and strolled over, whistling lightly.

"Fine day," he greeted, casting a glance aloft.

"Great!" echoed Flint.

"Kind of day on which it is worth while living," added Needham, thinking of the big roll which would shortly be transferred from the purser's safe to his pocket.

"Yes," nodded Barker. "It's a curious fact, but wherever I've been I've always noticed that Friday the 28th of this month is a remarkably fine day."

"Friday the 28th?" questioned Flint, with a shade settling on his face. "You've mistaken the date. This is Thursday the 27th."

"Oh, no it isn't," replied Barker. "This is the 28th. There was no 27th."

"Why, that's nonsense," Needham began to argue hotly. "Yesterday was Wednesday the 26th, therefore this must be Thursday the 27th. You know that well enough."

For answer Barker hailed the mate.

"These fellows," he said, "don't believe this is Friday the 28th. I guess you can settle the dispute."

"Sure," responded the mate. "Of course this is Friday the 28th. We crossed the 180 degree of longitude last night, westward bound, and dropped a day as usual. Coming east we add a day at the same place. If we didn't we'd arrive in Australia a day behind, and on the return trip, in San Francisco, a day ahead of time. Everybody knows that."

Everybody, perhaps, except Flint and Needham, as their looks of amazement clearly bore witness.

"I think," remarked Barker, patting Flint on the shoulder, "our settlement related only to Thursday the 27th. That day was not marked on the ship's log — in fact for us it never existed.

It's too bad for you to lose a day like that, but you can make up for it on the return trip. If I am not mistaken," he added, "I ran up against one of you fellows when a stranger in New York, and didn't come off quite so well. This time you got left, but then I've been across the Pacific before, and this is your first trip."

With a grin on his face and his hands thrust deep in his pockets Barker turned, and strolled along the deck forward, humming a popular air from a comedy opera as he went.



Dregs.*

BY R. E. MARSHALL.



UNDER a street lamp a scrubwoman stood in front of a florist's window. The east wind whipped around the delicatessen shop at the corner, flapping the woman's draggled skirts around her thick ankles, flooding her with the smell of boiled beef and cabbage.

She stood with her arms hanging loose at her sides, blinking at the window in the center of which stood a tall vase of roses labeled "Extra, fifty cents each." They were just opened, splendid in color, exquisitely modeled, fragrant and fragile; the woman was old, faded, toil-twisted and coarsened, ill-smelling and stocky.

She was thinking of a day long ago when a boy her own age had given her just such a rose as that tallest one. "It isn't half as pretty or sweet as you" he had said, which was true.

The rose, like the years of youth and strength, had long since crumbled away. A slip of it still grew and flourished and cast its scarlet petals, like drops of blood, over a neglected grave, neglected because the only one left to care for it was a scrubwoman too busy fighting for life to give anything to the dead.

The woman slouched before the window, drawn by the beauty the weary years had ground out of her life as a moth is drawn by a candle flame.

A college youth passed by with a girl on his arm. Her furs brushed the woman's greasy sleeve, and the scent from the roses at her breast blew, spicy and rich, in the other's face, and the sound of the girl's young and careless laugh rang in her ears, stabbing her with a sudden fierce revolt, a bitter and welling longing for something beside the dregs of life. Something of this showed in her face, the blind and questioning look of the

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starving, and a woman coming out of the delicatessen saw it.

"Poor soul," she thought as she paused a moment with the half contemptuous pity of the well fed. Then she remembered a certain night, before fortune in the shape of a job as waitress came her way, when she too had stood outside a bakery window and longed vainly for the price of a decent meal. That there could be a starvation other than that of the body she never dreamed.

"Poor soul," she muttered again, and taking fifty cents from her purse she pressed it into the charwoman's bony hand.

"Go on in," she said, "and get yourself a good dinner. Then you'll feel better." She gave her a little push and a smile that suggested the flash of white china, and hurried on.

The scrubwoman stood blinking at the coin in her hand. Her mind was slow to grasp the unexpected. Presently, however, she turned and entered the shop.

After awhile she walked down the street, moving with the waddling gait of the old and very weary. In one hand she held a piece of cheap sausage which she ate noisily and with evident relish. In the other hand she held a perfect scarlet rose at which she gazed with a deep and unthinking content. Its perfume rose to her nostrils and thrilled her with forgotten memories; more potent than opium it mounted to her brain, made her dreams seem real, so real that the warning yell of a policeman came to her ears like a faint and far away echo that was not separated from the crash and roar and blinding light that followed.

In the next morning's paper there was a six-line story of a street-car accident, and among the city's unclaimed dead there lay a little old woman whose features were set in an expression of youth and sweetness, an austere triumph and glory so great that it made the scarlet rose crumpled upon her breast seem tawdry like a daub beside a cameo. So powerful is the chemistry of Death with even the dregs of Life.



The Branding Iron.*

BY DONALD KENNICOTT.



ATE on Initiation Night, three of the older alumni sat smoking in an upper room of the Fraternity House. The apartment was lighted only by the Mystic Lamp about which the ritual of the Fraternity centers and which, with its curiously colored shade patterned in occult devices, symbolizes the dominion of the soul over the body. The men were one-time classmates, here reunited after many years; Simeon Railsford, the attorney; Waring, the specialist in nervous diseases; John Dasent, a lean, weather-browned ranchman, who had come East on one of his rare visits from the New Mexican solitude in which for some years he had secluded himself. Railsford ended a long silence.

"Queer thing," he remarked, — "that blister showing up on the boy's arm that way."

Dasent, who had only arrived during the dinner, after the initiation ceremonies were over, looked up inquiringly. "What's that?" he asked.

"Why," Railsford explained, "a thing that happened during the performance to-night — before you came. The kids fixed up one particularly devilish stunt and played it on that nervous little chap who sat next to Waring there at the dinner. They told him that all of us were branded on the arm with our monogram and that they were going to do it to him. They did everything possible to make him believe that they were in earnest; showed him fake scars painted on their own arms; had him stripped to the waist and tied to a chair; heated the iron while he watched them — went through all sorts of mummerly until they had him convinced that they were really going to do it. Then one of them pretended to press the hot iron against his

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arm, but instead a man behind touched him with a piece of ice while they let the iron hiss against a piece of raw meat. Well, when the ice touched him, the poor devil jerked about and gasped horribly; and afterward he fainted. And do you know ten minutes later, there was a big blister on his arm where the ice had touched him, just as though he really had been burned. Now what do you make of that?"

"Oh," Waring deprecated, "there's nothing so remarkable about it. That sort of thing is common enough in hypnotic trances."

Dasent lit a fresh cigar. "Well," he commented, "it certainly must have been rather surprising, though I have heard of similar occurrences. I'm sorry I wasn't there. Do you know if things of that kind have any relation to the stigmata of the saints? The old Spanish padre down where I live is always talking about that. Saint Francis, it seems, had scars appear on his body which were exact replicas of the wounds of Christ. And Saint Catherine and a lot of others had similar holy symbols appear on them."

"Undoubtedly," the physician answered. "In my opinion, they are all examples of the same thing—shadows which the light of a passionately brooding or perturbed mind has cast upon the screen of the flesh."

"I'm a lot interested in that sort of thing," the westerner remarked after a moment's silence, "because it seems to explain something that happened when I first went down to the Oscuro country."

"I expect you've seen a lot of queer things out there," Railford suggested.

"Yes," Dasent admitted, slowly; and then with growing animation, "yes, I have. It's all so different down there though, it's hard to make you fellows understand. It's a desert country you know—desert mountains and desert hills and desert plains. A little river that dries up before it gets anywhere. Here and there, ten and twenty miles apart, a ranch-house, or a well and windmill, or a sheep camp. Yes, I've seen strange things there—things mysterious, touching, splendid, pitiful. I have seen a Mexican of the flagellant cult, with a great needle-thorned cactus

bound tightly to his naked back, striding along a moonlit trail in the mountains and bawling out the Gloria as if his ecstasy were mere drunken hilarity. I have come upon two men fighting a duel, one of them armed with barrels of a broken shotgun, the other with a live rattlesnake. I have seen a woman who had been gently reared in the East cooking food over a cow-dung fire beside a tent out on the hot plain, and displaying the happiest face I ever saw on a human being. I have seen a child of ten digging a grave. Yes, I've seen strange things there, but I don't think any of them were as dramatic, as significant, as amazing, as this business I was thinking of."

Dasent paused for a moment and then went on in the low, meditative tones and in the somewhat formal manner of one more accustomed to silence than to speech.

"One morning just after the annual June rains, I was riding up the river trail with my old Mexican herder Jacomé, when we overtook a queer, epileptic chap named Shaumann who had recently left off his work as camp cook to start in the cattle business for himself. His horse looked as if it had been ridden hard, though he said he had only come from a place about five miles below.

"Well, he rode along with us and a bit farther on we came upon a horse with an empty saddle. Now, you know there is something in the mere appearance of a riderless horse, which, like the sight of blood or the sound of certain tones in the voice, strikes straight to one's heart — seems inevitably significant of tragedy; so now, I felt an immediate preience of disaster.

"We spurred forward and coming closer, recognized the beast as one belonging to a neighboring ranchman named Will Heath — a quiet, well-liked young chap who lived with his partner not far up the river. As the dragging bridle rein showed that the horse had not intentionally been sent home, I sent Jacomé to warn Heath's partner — an English remittance man named Hawley — and dragging Shaumann with me, set off to follow the horse's tracks.

"The trail proved a long one, clear enough over the recently wet soil, but difficult to follow over the occasional stretches of bare rock. About noon Jacomé overtook us, accompanied by the

Englishman, Hawley. The direction of the trail now indicated pretty clearly whence the horse had come — an outlying water-hole belonging to the Hawley-Heath partnership, near which a portion of their cattle were accustomed to range. Sure enough, it was there that just before sundown, our search terminated.

"The water-hole was in a lonely valley among the hills; as we rode over the last ridge, the arms of a huge, sun-warped wooden windmill appeared; then the rough log tower upon which it was supported; then a little shack, a branding corral, and a string of troughs about which were gathered a few dozen Hereford and long-horn cattle. The beasts were silent, but stirred about uneasily, jostling one another; a little group of them were sniffing at some object which lay on the ground in the unbarred corral. The windmill creaked around on its uneven bearings by jerks, with a rusty, dismal and ceaseless clangor.

"When we came nearer, the cattle fled wildly and we could then see that we had come to the end of our quest. Heath lay on his side there in the corral near the ashes of a fire, one arm doubled under him, the other outstretched. Above the left eye was a curious wound, the exact impress of a letter "C," that had evidently fractured the skull. As Hawley turned the body over, an ugly, yellow spotted lizard ran out from under it.

"Well, for a moment or two we knelt there, looking first at the face of the dead man and then at each other. Then Hawley spoke:

" 'Branding iron,' he said simply.

"No one answered him for a little; the thing was obvious. And the conclusion which two of us, speaking almost at once, voiced a moment later, seemed almost equally obvious. 'Charlie Conway,' we exclaimed. For in the first place, Conway was the only one in the neighborhood whose brand required the use of a 'C' iron; on previous occasions he had been involved in dubious affairs; and only a week before, he had quarreled with Heath over a question of water rights. So next morning, after the body had been brought to Oscuro City, a self-constituted posse rode out posthaste to arrest the man.

"Well, Conway was evidently warned in some fashion, for they found his wife and two children alone at the little log house

in which he lived and in some anxiety over his unexplained absence. The fact of his disappearance settled any doubts which may have remained as to the identity of Heath's murderer. Yet there were causes enough to excuse the flight of even an innocent man, for, in spite of some reforms, justice in the Oscuro country only too often took its simplest and least accurate form—lynch law. Still, flight is like suicide, apt to be accepted as a species of confession. After that there was no further question as to the identity of the guilty man."

Dasent stopped and then after a pause looked up abruptly. "This boring you fellows?" he inquired. "No? Well, I'll go on then because I really would like to know what you think of the affair. I'll get to Hecuba presently." He relit his cigar, puffed a moment and then continued:

"Well, for days and weeks then, rumors ran about the district that Conway had been seen here or there; that he had made his way out to the railway and thence eastward; that he had crossed the line into Mexico; that he was living in disguise among the Mescalero Apaches; that he was hiding in the hills near his own home. The latter was probably correct, for one night two or three months afterward, some one caught a glimpse of him through the lighted window of his house. And before morning he had been captured.

"As I have said, every one was convinced of Conway's guilt; yet there was no disposition to harm him as yet. Sufficient time had elapsed for tempers to cool somewhat, and the sight of his woe-begone family pled for at least the decent delay of legal procedure. He was taken to Oscuro City; he was committed to the jail there; in due course he was brought to trial. The evidence against him was entirely circumstantial, but in the eyes of the jury called upon to judge him, it seemed damning and he was sentenced to death.

"Two days after his condemnation, Conway broke jail, got hold of a horse and fled to the hills again. And at that, we went back to lynch-law. It was felt that time enough had been wasted in futile formalities; that a bad example had been set for the encouragement of other evil-doers; that a painful but necessary business had been needlessly protracted; that the ends

of justice had been jeopardized if not defeated. It was a 'Vigilance Committee' that forthwith set out in pursuit of the fugitive and among its members there was a tacit understanding that the man was to be captured, but not brought back to Oscuro City.

"As you can imagine, flight in that region had narrow limits, for one essential of life — water — was to be had in but few places. So when a Mexican mesquite digger reported that he had seen Conway riding due northeast, we knew that he must be making for the railroad town some one hundred and fifty miles distant, by way of two watering places — the well where Heath's body had been found and a little spring in the hills about a day's journey farther on.

"This, therefore, was the direction taken by the pursuing party — Hawley, two cow-punchers named Bull McPadden and Campbell Dow, Shaumann, a freighter named Anderson, Jacomé, myself and half a dozen others whose names I don't remember. Conway had at least six hours' start of us, but was a heavy man and, as it appeared, was badly mounted. We, on the contrary, had brought extra mounts with us and were able to maintain a telling pace.

"We rode all day and that night watered our horses and rested for about an hour at the well where we'd found Heath's body. Most of us were used to hard rides and to ugly affairs of one sort or another and so stood it pretty well, but there by the windmill I noticed that the business seemed to be getting on Shaumann's nerves. His hand trembled and he kept looking over at the place where Heath had lain, as if the memory of the sight haunted him. It troubled me, too, I'll confess.

"Well, after a little we mounted and rode on; we rode all that night — like a troop of ghosts hurrying through the darkness. Shaumann kept close to me and every few minutes he would pass his hand across his forehead as if he were groping for something.

"At dawn of the second morning we found the trail not more than two hours old and in spite of our fatigue we pressed on. A little after noon we came upon the body of Conway's foundered horse — a plow animal, whose carcass, lying at the foot of a

stony ascent, seemed to protest pitifully at the cruel injustice of the task which had been required of it.

"Upon the collapse of his horse, Conway tried to double back on foot and so elude us, but a man riding far out on one side caught sight of him dodging behind a big *palmilla* and in a few moments he was surrounded. He made no further attempt at escape or resistance, but calmly seated himself on a boulder and waited for us, his chin on his chest and his great, gnarled hands hanging limply at either side like those of an exhausted boxer. We mounted him on a spare horse and rode forward a few miles to the spring of which I have spoken — a tiny trickle of bitter water which dripped from the base of a huge crag known to the Mexicans from its grotesque shape as *El Zopilote* — the vulture.

"And now comes that part of this affair which has always seemed to me so mysterious, so amazing and yet so significant. Just at sun-down we reached the spring, and after watering and hobbling our horses, encamped there. The captive, poor wretch, maintained a sullen silence, but drank and ate avidiously of such food as we were able to offer him. He was then placed under guard in a little stone hut, built against the overhanging rock by the sheepherders, who, at lambing time, brought their flocks to the neighborhood of the spring. A single cottonwood, the only tree in many miles, grew a few yards below the water. It was determined that in accordance with the custom in such matters, that which we had to do would take place at sunrise the next morning.

"For a long time then, we sat silently about a little fire of mesquite roots — a company of gaunt, stern-featured, desert men, bent on the fulfilment of what we believed to be our duty. We were exhausted beyond the point of normal fatigue by the racking stress of the pursuit, and crouched with our torpid limbs cramped in unnatural attitudes, staring wakeful and wide-eyed at the tiny fire, at the thin fume of acrid smoke that rose vertically upward, at the icily brilliant scintillation of the desert stars.

"The fine white alkali dust had powdered our clothing and clung thick on beards and eyelashes; caked and furrowed with

sweat or with blood from drouth-cracked lips and eyelids, it drew leprous and fantastic masks upon the familiar faces. And over all — over that somber assemblage of ashen-visaged men, over the great hump-shouldered crag behind which the moon had risen, over the vast, cactus dotted plain — there seemed to brood a sentience, dark and pervading and inclusive as the night itself, of the grim business at hand.

“At last one of the gray masked specters about the fire shook himself free from the first stupor of fatigue, and stumbling over to the pool below the spring, washed the dust and grime from his face and hands. One by one then, the rest of us followed, less it appeared, from custom, than from a sense of fitness, a feeling that some ritual of purification was proper to the hour and to the occasion. Returning, some of us spread out blankets, yet no one attempted to sleep; instead, all resumed their places, silent, preoccupied, aloof from one another.

McPadden crouched on his heels, a grotesque and ungainly shadow; Anderson, the freighter, lay on his blanket, resting on one elbow; Shaumann sat with his fingers clasped about his knees, staring tremulously as if at a ghost and occasionally passing his hand across his eyes with that groping gesture, as if the alkali dust had hurt them; Hawley stood opposite him with arms folded and feet wide apart, watching the little column of smoke.

“Suddenly Anderson lurched awkwardly to his feet. ‘For the love of God,’ he cried. ‘Won’t somebody say something? And let’s have some light.’

“No one answered him and turning, he trudged off into the darkness toward a little grove of *palmilla*; thence he presently returned dragging two great fibrous trunks behind him and threw them on the red embers of the fire. In a moment or two these blazed up, flinging out a wide pennon of flame that clearly illuminated the circle of figures about it and threw the distinctive features of each into clear relief — Hawley, with his clean-cut limbs and tawny moustache, the huge bulk of Bull McPadden, the patriarchal bead of old Jacomé, the glassy, prominent eyes and nervously mobile features of Shaumann. It was to him that Hawley spoke, after a moment.

“‘Shaumann,’ he said, abruptly, ‘what the devil is the matter with your forehead — there just over your eye?’ He spoke sharply and there was in his voice a note that seemed compounded of astonishment, of perplexity, perhaps even of fear.

“And upon Shaumann, too, the effect seemed unaccountably disturbing. He started back with twitching, distorted lips and jerked a nervous hand up to his face. ‘Nothing,’ he protested in his shrill, whining tone. ‘There ain’t nothing a-matter with it. Unless maybe so I scratched it coming through the *chaparral* back there.’

“Here McPadden turned toward him. ‘Now that *is* funny,’ he remarked, placidly. ‘I sure *did* think I noticed something there too. He extended a huge fist and pulled Shaumann’s arm away. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘there sure is, a sort of — well I’m damned.’

“He turned about to the Englishman with a look of amazement on his face. But Hawley paid no attention to him; leaving his place opposite, he advanced slowly toward the ex-cook, staring at him as if possessed and drawn forward by some uncanny fascination. Seizing the man by the shoulders, he turned him so that the light fell more fully on his face and stood there for a moment gazing. The next instant he cried out my name, called to me in a voice which shook with that which had struck deeper than horror. ‘Come here,’ he cried. ‘Look — look!’

“Hurrying to his side, I found Shaumann on his knees, trembling pitifully in his captor’s grasp and striving to avert his face. ‘Look,’ Hawley cried again, pointing. Shaumann’s face shone pallid in the fire-light. There, above the left eye, was what seemed a livid scar in the shape of a letter ‘C’ — a mark of the exact shape and in the precise location of the wound on Heath’s forehead. A faint crimson dew glistened upon it, the ghastly blood-sweat.

“Hawley turned to me. ‘You saw the mark on Heath’s body,’ he demanded passionately. ‘What’s this? What can this be? What’s this, I say?’ I could make no answer; nor from the others who had crowded about us did there come any word save the incoherent speech of amazement.

“It was Shaumann who spoke next. ‘Don’t look at me like

that,' he gasped. 'You ain't got no right to look at me like that. It wasn't me that done it. I wasn't near there. No, I wasn't. It wasn't. It wasn't.'

"Shaumann was thus the first to accuse. We looked at one another in questioning silence for a moment. Then Jacomé pushed forward and with a stick drew the letter 'S' in the sand near the fire. '*Miré*,' he said, calling upon us to look. Then with a swift motion he obliterated half of it, leaving only 'C,' and then turning, pointed to Shaumann.

"There was an excited murmur. Then Hawley shook the poor wretch by the shoulder. 'You *did* do it,' he cried. 'Look at me if you can and say that you didn't.'

"At that Shaumann winced; then as if by a tremendous effort he steadied his limbs and slowly turned his face toward that of the dead man's friend and raised his eyes. For a moment he returned the accusing gaze silently and without flinching. 'You *did* do it,' Hawley repeated.

"Shaumann moved his lips without sound; then in a slow, expressionless and quite altered voice, he answered — 'Yes. I did it. I was branding a calf that — that he thought was his. He rode up quiet so I didn't never hear him until he was right on me. He had a gun in his hand and I thought my only chance was to be first. I hit up at him with the iron that was in my hand and caught him fair. He fell out of the saddle and his horse ran. I stayed by him a while, but pretty soon he died and then I went away.'

"Shaumann paused, sighed heavily, and then went on in the same dreary, expressionless and unconcerned tone. 'But he got even,' he continued. 'He got even. Every night I've seen him. First he'd come when I was asleep and wake me; and lately, since I couldn't sleep any more, he'd come anyhow. Always he rides up just like he did then, only he has an iron and is going to hit me with it. And Conway, too. He comes behind with a rope around his neck. Yes, I guess he's got even. Always he's been following me with that iron. And now —'

"He stopped, raised his hand wearily to his forehead, then with a look of mild perplexity, lowered it and looked at his palm. It was now stained darkly. And as he looked, the ex-

pression of his face changed — changed horribly, unimaginably. He uttered a dry, gasping sound; then with a spasmodically swift motion, he snatched the pistol from Hawley's belt, clapped it to his forehead, and fired. The bullet tore the whole top of his head off."

Dasent paused. For some moments none of them spoke. Railsford sat twirling the cord of his glasses; Waring stared fixedly at his unlighted cigar. At length Dasent inquired abruptly — "Well, Waring, tell me what you make of that?"

The physician looked up, smiled, but did not at first speak. Instead, he indicated with a gesture the lamp on the table between them — the Mystic Lamp, which, with its curiously colored shade patterned in occult devices, symbolizes the dominion of the soul over the body.



The Gabriel Klint Mystery.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.



If a man were to climb the Metropolitan Tower in New York to-day, and by means of a vast megaphone scream out to the hustling city that he had discovered the solution of the Gabriel Klint Happenings, every grown man and woman in Manhattan would strain their ears to hear what he had to say. The mind hates a mystery. Baffled curiosity erects within the brain an enormous interrogation mark, that stands up through the days and through the nights demanding an answer. That is why the mention of the name of Gabriel Klint will always command attention. It is connected forever with a gigantic mystery which has grown greater since the aching brains of the wisest of Manhattanites put aside the puzzle of the "Twelve Incidents" of the Klint affair four years ago last December.

This story doesn't give a full solution of the mystery. It gives what might be termed a half-solution. It is simply Cumner's story, and Cumner was considered a witless dreamer for years before he told me this.

I met him one evening at a little obscure café in Third Avenue. Strange people came to that café. The coffee they served there was really good, and the regular habitués came for the coffee alone. The other dishes were for irregular customers who occasionally found their way into the place. In that dirty, long room with its low ceiling one could find at times the most cosmopolitan gathering in New York. There were moustached men who were continually plotting to pull some one from a Presidential chair in South America; greasy Nihilists from Russia, who spat viciously when they spoke of "The Little Father"; suntanned adventurers of the Seven Seas, and men who hoped that Justice

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would never tear from her eyes the bandage to which they owed their liberty.

Cumner was a regular. He sat always in the darkest corner, the corner where the cigar smoke used to gather in thick clouds when the little currents from the swinging doors swept it from the tables in the center of the room. Cumner was one of life's failures. He had the appearance of one who had been ducking continually from the fist of Fate. He was servile to the bearded Greek who owned the place; he took special pains to keep in the good graces of the surly waiter, and apologies sprang from his tongue by the battalion if he brushed against a person's sleeve in the smoky little den.

I knew Cumner for seven months before he told me this story. A score of times we had spoken of the Gabriel Klint mystery before that evening, but Cumner had only shown the somewhat mild curiosity that one would expect from a quiet man of his type. But on this particular evening he startled me by leaning across the greasy table and making an assertion that left me dazed.

"I knew Gabriel Klint," he said, softly.

I looked at him in stupid wonder. That a man could calmly assert that he knew Gabriel Klint was disconcerting to my nerves. The police force of the United States had searched for Klint during the weeks that followed the happenings which the newspapers had named the "Twelve Incidents," but their search had been fruitless. Rewards had failed to bring him from his hiding place, although, as far as the public could see, he was not guilty of a crime. The Pittsburgh millionaire who advertised his willingness to pay him fifty thousand dollars if he would answer three questions got no response to his advertisement, and the curiosity of the public grew greater. It was no wonder that people were curious. They wanted to know how it came about that twelve persons in different walks of life, who had met with accidental death in New York during the month of December, 1906, should each have had a scrap of parchment bearing a single sentence and the name of Gabriel Klint in their pockets at the time they met their death. Not a relative of one of the deceased had ever heard the name before. There were no papers left by

the dead to shown their connection with the man, and yet that strange sentence of "I am at peace," above the name of "Gabriel Klinst" was found on the parchment slip that was in the clothing of each. It is no wonder I stared at Cumner when he asserted that he knew Klinst.

"Why — why," I stammered, "you're joking! There was a reward of a hundred thousand for any one who could describe him!"

"I didn't want the reward," he muttered.

"But you could have satisfied the curiosity of the people!" I cried. "Why, men and women have nearly gone insane trying to find out who he was, and how the scrap of paper came into the possession of their relatives."

"That was nothing to do with me," retorted Cumner. "I look after my own business."

I felt at that moment that Cumner was speaking the truth when he said that he knew the bearer of the mysterious name that was on the parchment slips found on the dead. He was not the man who would seek notoriety by making a statement that was untrue. The thin sensitive face and the apologetic manner that was chronic with him, would immediately convince one that he did not wish to use the assertion as a means of dragging himself into the limelight.

"But, Cumner," I spluttered, "how in the name of all that is holy did you meet him?"

"I was his agent," he replied, quietly. "Listen, Dalton, I will tell you all about it. I have never spoken of it to any one till to-night, and I don't know why I should speak of it to you. Still, I have a feeling that it would do me good to speak of it, so I will tell you the story from the beginning.

"Klinst was a visitor here. He wasn't a regular, but he came about once a week, generally on Saturday nights, and we became intimate. He was a tall, thin man, with a clean-shaven face; I should take him to be a man of about forty years. No, not one of the alleged portraits the newspapers published resembled him in the slightest degree. Neither did any of the people who came forward with statements that they knew a man of the name, make a near guess at the real man.

For my man was the real Gabriel Klinst. I'm sure of that!"

Cumner halted for a moment, sipped his coffee with a meditative air, and again leaned across the table towards me.

"I know mine was the real Klinst," he murmured. "I know! Do you hear? He — *he*, the man who came here on Saturday nights, gave me those parchment slips, and it was I who delivered them. Yes. That dozen! I gave them out!"

I forgot everything when Cumner made that assertion. The babble from the tables that were near, the clouds of cigar smoke, the strange odors of the place — all were swept away, and the thin sensitive face of Cumner held me spellbound.

"I delivered those slips of parchment!" he repeated, hoarsely. "It astounds you, doesn't it? It astounds myself when I sit here and think about it, Dalton. But I did it. I've tried hard at times to make myself believe that it was a dream, but I carry the proof with me. That's the worst of it."

"But how did you do it?" I cried. "Tell me, Cumner! Tell me!"

The little man spread his elbows and used his thin hands as a support for his weak chin. "I'll tell you if you wait," he gurgled. "Klinst and I became intimate as I said. He would sit here at this table and sip his coffee with me on the nights that he came here, and sometimes we would walk home together. He had a big mind. He would talk on all sorts of subjects and I would listen. I listened too much, Dalton. Do you hear me? I listened to that man till I believed he was something above the ordinary. He was my idol. I looked up to him, drank in everything he said. He sort of — of —"

"Hypnotized you," I suggested.

"No, no; he didn't hypnotize me! It wasn't that; I mean it wasn't hypnotism. It was something else, something that I have been trying to fathom for this last four years. I suppose I'll never fathom it. Let us say that Klinst had a big brain and that I had none. Let us say anything. He might be a devil, — I think he was. But I didn't think so then. I thought him the brainiest man in the universe, and I believe he was. Yes, I believe that no one knew as much as Gabriel Klinst.

"It was on the twenty-ninth day of November that he gave me

those slips of parchment. They were all the same. Thirteen small pieces of parchment with the single sentence, 'I am at peace' printed above the signature of Gabriel Klinst. Why did he give them to me? I've asked myself that a thousand times, and then I laugh at my own stupidity. He gave them to me to give away to others!"

"Did Klinst tell you that at the time?" I asked breathlessly.

"He told me nothing that I can remember now," replied Cumner. "I know that he did say something, but I cannot think of it. I've tried mighty hard to recall the words, but I cannot. That's strange, isn't it? They went out of my head, and they have never returned. Why, I had forgotten them next morning! That was the thirtieth of November. I didn't go out that day. I stayed at home and tried to think what Klinst had told me to do with the slips of parchment. I knew it was no good trying to find him. He would never give me his address, and he only came here about once a week as I told you.

"On the morning of the first of December I took an 'L' train down to Brooklyn Bridge. I had the slips of parchment in my pocket, and I was still wondering about the forgotten instructions when I crossed Park Row and walked towards the Post Office. I was crossing Mail Street when I met Chester Brett. Mind you, I didn't know his name then. I recognized his photo when I saw it in the papers that evening.

"He passed me before the desire to give him one of those parchment slips had gripped me properly. Do you understand? I walked a few yards, and then — please, believe me, Dalton! — I rushed back and pushed one of those infernal slips into his hand. You know the rest. He was killed in the subway accident that afternoon, and the piece of parchment was found in his pocket."

"Did he say anything when you gave it to him?" I gasped. "Did he speak?"

"No," replied Cumner. "He looked at me and then at the scrap of paper, and passed on. All that day I tried to analyze the feeling that had prompted me to give him that bit of parchment, but I failed. I cannot tell the reason at this moment. I read in the evening papers that the scrap with its peculiar word-

ing had been found upon him when his body was recovered from the wreck, but I had no inclination to come forward and tell that I had given it to him about six hours before he was killed.

"It was on the afternoon of December the third that I saw Miss Spillane. She was in an automobile in front of the Grand Central Station. I was struck by the beauty of her face, — you will remember that she was an extraordinarily beautiful girl, and then — Why, yes; you know what I did. I gave her the second slip. She smiled as if she regarded me as a harmless lunatic, and I walked on without speaking. She was killed in Madison Avenue at dusk through the auto colliding with a van, and that scrap of parchment was found in her vanity bag. Why they didn't throw the slips away has been the biggest puzzle to me. I would — Oh, one did throw his away! I forgot him for the moment. He was the fourth, the loafer who fell from the string-piece into the North River. I met him about eleven o'clock on the night of the fourth of December. I was crossing Abingdon Square, and he asked me for the price of a meal. I was immediately gripped with the same feeling that had taken possession of me on three previous occasions. I tried to strangle it, but I couldn't. I gave a slip to him. He flung it down and cursed me as I walked on. At the corner of Bleecker Street I looked back. He had returned to the spot where he had thrown the slip, and when I looked back he was trying to decipher the printed sentence under a lamp. The piece of parchment was found upon him when the watchman on the pier had hauled him from the water, and if you will remember, that was the first occasion when the newspapers commented upon the strangeness of the fact that four people who had met with accidental deaths in four days had in their possession at the time of their death a parchment slip bearing the sentence 'I am at peace' and the signature of an unknown named 'Gabriel Klint.' I suppose it was the fact that Chester Brett, a millionaire, should have had in his pockets a card that was identical with one found in the rags of a vagrant, that stirred their curiosity.

"On the next morning I gave one to Farelly, the truckman, and he kept it. On the same night I gave another to young Philipson. It was strange that he hadn't read about the others in

the papers. That is what puzzles me now. Although every paper in New York commented on the matter the day after the vagrant was found in the North River with the slip in his pocket, not a single one of the other eight to whom I gave the seraps of parchment in the six following days seemed to have heard of the matter. At least they gave no sign that they had heard when I presented the slips.

"You don't wish me to tell you where I met each one, do you? I never addressed a word to one of the twelve. Don't you think that strange? They took me for a crank or a distributor of tracts or something like that. The words puzzled them."

"But how did you meet a person like Mrs. Hellings?" I asked. "She never went out."

"She was on her piazza," replied Cumner. "I was passing by, and that feeling gripped me. She must have kept the card in her hand while that fool son of hers was fiddling with the powder that exploded and killed her. I feel relieved at telling you all this, Dalton. I've wanted to tell some one, and I've done it at last. But he was the real Klint, wasn't he? No mistake about it! I haven't seen him from the moment he gave me the slips. Must have gone away out of the city. I've tramped over all this East Side looking for him, but the hunt was vain. He was the brainiest man I ever met, but he was a devil. He was surely —"

"Hold on!" I interrupted. "You say that Klint gave you thirteen slips, but there were only twelve cases reported. I mean only twelve persons had the slips on them when found."

"I only delivered twelve," replied Cumner. "I have never had a desire to give the other away."

"Do you mean to say that you still have it?" I cried.

"Certainly," he murmured. "I have it here in my pocket. I'll show it to you."

He placed his thin fingers in his vest pocket and pulled out a serap of parchment. He held it across the table for my inspection, but a wave of fear seized me at that moment and I sprang back from it.

"I don't want it!" I cried. "Put it away!"

Cumner laughed and lifted his hand to return the slip to his

pocket, but the movement was never completed. A heavy piece of the plaster cornice immediately above his head came away suddenly and struck him with tremendous force. He lurched forward upon the table, gurgled a few words, then remained perfectly still. The policeman who was called in took the card from his fingers and held it till the coroner came.

As I said in the start, this story does not explain everything concerning the Gabriel Klintst Happenings. It tells all that Cunner knew, but there is something yet to be told. How the thin little dreamer came to pick the persons who were in the Great Shadow is a mystery that will always puzzle. But he did pick them. Perhaps his own death resulted from the fact that he tried to give a card to a person about whom he saw no halo of tragedy. It was the first time he had attempted to hand out a slip without the "inspiration," and it looked to me as if Destiny had blackhanded him. It was curious, wasn't it?



The Parable of Millard Who Loved Blessed Farm Life at a Distance.*

BY C. M. HOFFMAN-SCHERER.



RAY MILLARD was born on a farm, without his consent. If his father had tried to get his consent to being born on a farm, he and the old man would have had a serious difference before he was born. That is, it seems fair to conclude that such would have been the case, since Ray showed a decided dislike for farm life as soon as old enough to show dislike for anything. He had got barely big enough to do little chores when his father began to hurry him out of bed at four o'clock of mornings; and if the old man was in doubt whether it was a little too early, he gave the call Ray so hated to hear, for the father was desperately afraid that by accident it might sometime be a fraction of a second after four.

Cold winter mornings Ray would get out of bed and stumble around in the dark, while he was thinking up new ways to dislike living on a farm. Then, when he was set to pulling weeds after they had got so big and the ground so dry that it called for the strength of a man, Ray went on thinking up new ways to dislike farm life.

When the boy got an opportunity now and then to go to town with his father, he was quick to see what lives the town boys led and how they dressed. All that helped him to think of new reasons why he did not like being a farm slave. He noticed that town boys jingled money in their pockets. He didn't. He couldn't. He had none to jingle. He worked like a mule, while they passed most of their time in idleness or at work that did not give them the backache or make their fingers thick and stiff. Their shirts were clean, white; his, not white, dirty.

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He looked up to the town boys and they looked down on him, as he observed his father looked up to men who lived in town while they did not perceptibly look up to his father. People would ride out from town to fish along the creek that flowed through the pasture, and had plenty of leisure for such pastime. If Ray wanted to go fishing, his father would think of work that needed doing too much for Ray to waste any time hunting worms and feeding them to fish. Likewise, town people would come out and hunt all over the farm, but Ray was not allowed time for hunting. Work was the only thing he could hunt for. He was led to it, and sicked on it. If he wanted to go nutting, it was the same old story — work, work, work, and more work. Their farm raised the fish, and the game, and the nuts, that the town folks got, while Ray was such a work beast that he couldn't get time to gather what the farm produced.

It was a puzzle to Ray why his father was always telling him what a good thing it was to live on the farm, how independent a farmer can be, and how honorable the work of a farmer is. Everybody united with his father in saying these things, and everybody acted like they were untrue. "They all are telling lies, or they're all acting them," Ray said, "for their words and their actions don't gee; and actions have the reputation of speaking louder than words."

Ray liked books as much as he disliked getting up at four o'clock on cold, dark mornings; as much as he disliked pulling big weeds out of hard earth; as much as he disliked a life of all work and no play. His father grumbled and worried because the boy wanted to study instead of being a farm slave. But the dislike of the old man for what interested Ray did not make Ray dislike it, and he kept on studying and being sorry that he was a farm slave.

By and by the boy became a man, was of age, was his own boss, could stay on the farm or leave it. Did he stay? Answer it yourself. You won't have to guess twice. He worked his way through college while the old man pitied his judgment. Ray looked back at the farm as a man who has been in jail looks back at the jail, as something he has been very closely connected with, but which he would forget if he could.

When Ray was graduated from college he went into newspaper work, and was soon writing for agricultural papers. His writings were in great demand owing to the plausible way in which he could urge young men to stay on the farm. He could urge this with so much more grace than his father ever could that farmer fathers would sit up nights to read such assertions from his pen and show them to their sons who were impatient of enduring what Ray endured at their age.

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353,168

Gain of 17,644 Per Day Over July, 1910

Boston Sunday Post
288,666

Gain of 31,148 Per Sunday Over July, 1910

Circulation Statement of the Boston Daily Post and Boston Sunday Post
Day by Day for the Month of July, 1911.

	Sunday.	Daily.		Sunday.	Daily.
July 1.....		347,080	July 19.....		354,088
July 2.....	288,449		July 20.....		354,994
July 3.....		347,080	July 21.....		354,050
July 4.....		357,917	July 22.....		356,662
July 5.....		350,605	July 23.....	288,568	
July 6.....		346,638	July 24.....		356,224
July 7.....		346,889	July 25.....		354,065
July 8.....		349,636	July 26.....		354,869
July 9.....	288,729		July 27.....		355,951
July 10.....		352,289	July 28.....		355,908
July 11.....		352,028	July 29.....		356,753
July 12.....		352,076	July 30.....	288,629	
July 13.....		352,713	July 31.....		358,003
July 14.....		353,401			
July 15.....		353,760	Total Daily Posts, 26 days....		9,182,369
July 16.....	288,959		Total Sunday Posts, 5 days....		1,443,334
July 17.....		355,395	Daily Average, 26 days.....		353,168
July 18.....		353,295	Sunday Average, 5 days.....		288,666

Five Julys with the Post

Year	Daily	Sunday
1907 - - - - -	245,654	221,787
1908 - - - - -	255,072	234,753
1909 - - - - -	284,674	251,506
1910 - - - - -	335,524	257,518
1911 - - - - -	353,168	288,666

Comparing July with July, Note the Steady, Persistent, Healthy Growth

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